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ABSTRACT

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QUALITY FROM STATEHOUSE TO STATISTICS:

LINKING "EDUCATION GOVERNORS" WITH INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

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Abstract

Gubernatorial mandates involving value-added assessment and teacher competency testing have intensified external expectations of the institutional research community. With governors thus promoting quality in higher education, institutional researchers must exert leadership in identifying potential implications of state policies. This paper examines the image of twenty modern "Education Governors" by considering (1) the correspondence between the promises in their public addresses and actual policies and (2) their personal attributes and direct involvement in education. Overwhelmingly, these "Education Governors" proved true to their word, indicating that institutional researchers can take the lead within their university by scrutinizing gubernatorial program proposals from the outset.

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Governors: An Emerging Constituency for Institutional Research

Daily encounters with a wide array of constituents lead institutional researchers to "expect the unexpected." Of course, seasoned practitioners are accustomed to the routine requirements of higher education's statewide governing or coordinating bodies and the national Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Somewhat less predictable, although closer to home, are inquiries by on-campus constituents -- including top institutional officials, faculty, and, perhaps, students. However, the present decade has introduced a dramatic and unexpected change, easily overshadowing the shift from HEGIS (the Higher Education General Information System) to IPEDS. As expressed by one former university president,

> What has changed in the 1980's is the role of the Governor. Governors today are very much aware of the correlation between first-class universities and a sound state economy. The networks of research activity around Boston, the Research Triangle in North Carolina, and California's Silicon Valley are cited by envious state officials all over the country as examples of the

> benefits of close ties between industry, state government, and higher education. (Davis, 1988, p. A52).

Indeed, governors have become key constituents, playing a dual role as both consumers and instigators of institutional research in search of elusive "quality." In their now-familiar 1986 publication, Time for Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education (NGA), the governors rigorously reviewed educational quality at all levels throughout these United States and probed their own power to make a distinct difference. Specifically, the report of the Task Force on College Quality, chaired by Missouri's Governor John Ashcroft, stands as a signal declaration of gubernatorial emphasis on such basic institutional research issues as effectiveness and student outcomes assessment. The governors collectively concurred,

> As the primary source of funds for public higher education, the states have a major stake in the quality of postsecondary institutions that goes beyond measures of input and processes. State attention must be directed to the outcomes of the higher education system -- namely, measuring how much students learn in college. (NGA, 1986, p. 156)

To further clarify how they could "determine and monitor [their] state's progress in the area of undergraduate student outcomes" (NGA, 1986, p. 163), these state chief executives recommended the following critical questions:

(1) Does each higher education institution in the state have a clear statement of institutional mission?

(2) At each institution of higher education in the state with a function of undergraduate instruction, what assessment practices are in place to evaluate student, program, and institutional performance?

(3) What state incentives exist to encourage the assessment of undergraduate students, undergraduate programs, and institutions?

(4) What information is reported regularly to the public concerning undergraduate student learning, undergraduate program quality, and undergraduate institutional quality? (NGA, 1986, p. 163)

In short, governors have insisted, "Public policymakers, taxpayers, students, and parents should expect colleges and universities to fulfill their promises" (NGA, 1986, p. 159). But is the reverse also true? Can colleges and universities expect that governors will fulfill their promises to education?

Writing in Time for Results, former Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander anticipated his colleagues' commitment to education "for the long haul" ahead (p. 6). One year later, the Foreword to the governors' first annual follow-up report, Results in Education: 1987, concluded, "Governors do remember the advice they gave each other last year. And the evidence is that [they] intend to keep acting on it" (NGA, 1987, p. ix). In addition to evaluating advances in college quality, among other reforms, this report

boldly proposed:

> All governors should launch a joint venture to strengthen the colleges. There should be systemwide information on how well colleges achieve their missions. It is our responsibility to help define it. There should also be campus-specific information. The trustees, presidents, and faculty are responsible for defining that, and for using it to strengthen programs. These two ways of thinking about college quality have to support one another. They should be valid, reasonable, and respectful of the missions of each college. And they should reflect the stake all citizens have in effective undergraduate programs. (NGA, 1987, p. vi)

The author of these words, New Jersey's dynamic two-term Governor Thomas H. Kean, has invested vigorously in colleges and universities -- expending money and the still more precious commodities of time, energy, and political capital. "He has a lot of good ideas," observes Education Commission of the States President Frank Newman; "he's put himself on the line" (Mooney, 1987, p. A28). Nor does he mind placing others on the line when they have promised tangible results. For instance, Kean arranged for the presidents of New Jersey's institutions of higher learning to occupy special front-row balcony seats when he delivered his 1985 State of the State Address. After dangling the carrot of Challenge Grant Awards, the Governor characteristically dared those officials "to chart a course of excellence [for their colleges] and stick to it."

Throughout his gubernatorial tenure, Kean's aim has been

> to incorporate higher education into New Jersey's social and economic framework -- that is, to institutionalize the role that public and private colleges would play in the state's overall development...The institutions needed money and a continued commitment from state leaders and legislators, but they also needed to formulate long-term goals and improve academic quality, student performance, teaching, and the number of minority-group members who stay in college. (Mooney, 1987, p. A28)

Consequently, many New Jersey higher education officials have credited Kean with vision -- an uncommon quality in state higher-education politics, and the October 14, 1987, Chronicle of Higher Education christened him "New Jersey's Education Governor" (Mooney, 1987).

"Education Governors": Policy Advocates or Political Packages?

This once unusual phrase -- the "Education Governor" -- now automatically conjures such familiar names as Thomas Kean, Lamar Alexander, or Bill Clinton. Since 1983 the label has been applied increasingly to a number of state political leaders by the Chronicle, Education Week, and Phi Delta Kappan. In fact, "it is the rare governor who has not, in the past two years, devoted a large portion of his or her [attention] to nuts-and-bolts questions of educational policy" (Caldwell, 1985, p. 1). Paraphrasing Daniel Boorstin (1962), fact or fantasy, this "Education Governor" image has become the fashionable "thing" among governors of the

1980s. Yet, do they truly "suit action to. . .word, [and] word to. . . action" (O'Keeffe, 1798/1977, p. 62)? What is the reality embedded beneath the popular "Education Governor" veneer? And, what are the implications for institutional research?

To address such questions, this study distilled the facts underlying the "Education Governor" image by examining: (1) the extent to which specific education measures proposed in Inaugural and State of the State Addresses of twenty "Education Governors" of the 1960s through 1980s corresponded with the subsequent actions of these officials and (2) special personal attributes, professional goals and activities, and direct involvement in education which characterize this same contingent of "Education Governors." Attention then turns to the institutional research practitioner -- a seldom recognized but pivotal figure to governors espousing the importance of mission statements and assessment.

In Search of the "Education Governor": Individuals and Image

Unfortunately, the phrase "Education Governor" suffers "the usual muddled connotation of all popular words" (Fitzgerald, 1920, p. 270). Hence, as Humpty Dumpty advised Alice, "When I use a word. . .it means just what I choose it to mean -- neither more nor less" (Carroll, 1871/1960, p. 269). As suggested above, such is the case with "Education Governors;" since individual conceptions of the image vary so, also, do the names to which that label becomes attached. However, closer scrutiny of the historical record reveals that the "Education Governor" phenomenon is by no means unique to the past twenty-five years; in reality, the modern manifestation proves heir to a legacy which is clearly traceable to turn-of-the-century North Carolina. As political and historical commentators generally agree on this more tightly circumscribed group of the early

1900s, it yields a strong rationale for identification of their current counterparts. Thus, complete understanding of the modern "Education Governors" presupposes knowledge of their documented early twentieth century antecedents.

According to observer Charles Kuralt (1986), "In North Carolina [of the early 1900s] there was a succession of what were termed "good-schools governors" -- men who preached how much we had to sacrifice to make our schools better. (These were as opposed to the 'roads governors,' who were a different bunch altogether.)" (p. 243). Perhaps the most celebrated of these "good-schools governors" was Charles Brantley Aycock who occupied North Carolina's executive mansion from 1901 through 1905. Virtually all historians and biographers of that era distinguish Aycock as the archetype "Education Governor." Aycock assumed office with the vow, "I shall devote the four years of my official time to upbuilding the public schools of North Carolina" (Orr, 1961, p. 168). His passionate personal crusade prompted the construction of approximately one new schoolhouse each day while gaining heightened salaries and preparation for both teachers and administrators.

"One of a small group of notably vigorous leaders of the legislature" (Orr, 1961, pp. 263-264), Aycock ably "used his powers as chief administrator of the state; he urged the legislature to enact new educational measures; and he sought to enlighten and stimulate the public" (p. 299). This "public" ultimately extended far beyond the borders of North Carolina; an enthusiastic campaigner for Robert Ogden's Southern Education Board, Aycock inspired audiences from Maine to Alabama and acquired a "wide reputation throughout the country" (Dabney, 1936, p. 345).

Witnessing this marked advancement of education in the "Tar Heel"

state, at least nine of Aycock's contemporaries -- including the governors of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia -- pursued a similar course. While an in-depth discussion of these early "Education Governors" lies beyond the scope of this paper, they are historically bound by the common thread of recognition in their own time as "great" or "outstanding" governors. In addition, the actions of each spoke louder than their words -- not only in their home state but throughout the region and nation. The Southern Education Board provided a focal point for their activities.

Converting Past to Present: Clarifying the Contemporary Core

Transporting these characteristics forward some fifty years affords a rational means of designating a defined (as opposed to definitive) group of modern "Education Governors." In 1978 political analyst Larry Sabato compiled a list of "outstanding" governors of the quarter century encompassing 1950 through 1975; from his extensive study, all were judged to have been chief executives "of conspicuous ability and competence whose [terms were] characterized by personal hard work and firm dedication and who diligently attempted (even if unsuccessful in part) to meet the needs of the people" of their state (Sabato, 1978, p. 51). Updated by Sabato in 1985, this roster was validated by a panel of five political scientists/policy analysts. Like their early twentieth century antecedents, the modern "Education Governors" also should be linked with a larger forum and have gained nationwide renown for their efforts; hence, Sabato's validated list was crossed with the names of the co-founders, interim steering committee members, and chairmen of the Education Commission of the States, organized in 1965 as a national alliance to enhance communication and cooperation among governors, state legislators,

professional educators, and lay leaders both within and among the separate states (Compact for Education, 1966, Article I).

As the comparison revealed, both groups share the following twenty governors of the 1960s through the 1980s: Jerry Apodaca (New Mexico, 1975-1979); Reubin Askew (Florida, 1971-1979); Edmund G. Brown, Sr. (California, 1959-1967); John Chafee (Rhode Island, 1963-1969); Bill Clinton (Arkansas, 1979-1981; 1983-present); Winfield Dunn (Tennessee, 1971-1975); Pierre S. duPont, IV (Delaware, 1977-1985); Robert D. Graham (Florida 1979-1987); Clifford T. Hansen (Wyoming, 1963-1967); Mark O. Hatfield (Oregon, 1959-1967); Richard J. Hughes (New Jersey, 1962-1970); James B. Hunt (North Carolina, 1977-1985); Thomas Kean (New Jersey, 1982-present); Tom McCall (Oregon, 1967-1975); Robert E. McNair (South Carolina, 1965-1971); William G. Milliken (Michigan, 1969-1983); Russell W. Peterson (Delaware, 1969-1973); Calvin L. Rampton (Utah, 1965-1977); Robert D. Ray (Iowa, 1969-1983); and Terry Sanford (North Carolina, 1961-1965).

Of these more recent "Education Governors," it was North Carolina's Terry Sanford who first looked to Aycock as a spiritual mentor, propelling the image into modern times. Sanford's speeches and imagery consciously invoked his predecessor's legacy. And, symbolically, Aycock's portrait occupied a prominent place in Sanford's office; some constituents even received autographed copies of a favorite Sanford photograph which displays this Aycock painting in the background. Although he left the executive mansion more than two decades ago and has since moved on to the United States Senate, commentators still praise Sanford as the epitome of the modern "Education Governor."

However, are these modern "Education Governors" genuinely committed to educational quality and effectiveness? To penetrate the image, education

promises appearing in Inaugural and State of the State Addresses of the twenty governors were compared with the tangible achievements of each administration. Since policy ultimately is implemented through the budgetary process, Budget Messages and actual state budget documents played a vital role in this research as did Special Messages on Education, United States Bureau of the Census publications, and state Statutes and Codes. In addition, biographical materials, professional journals, popular magazine and newspaper accounts, and college alumni bulletins all yielded valuable insights concerning each governor's personal background, professional associations, and involvement in education.

Following a brief demographic sketch of the cadre of modern "Education Governors," the discussion will highlight their general characteristics, accomplishments in office, and implicit ties to institutional research. If these individuals truly are men of their word, the rhetoric should parallel reality, and education should advance. Otherwise, the substance of these gubernatorial promises, like the fabric of the Emperor's new clothes, will fade upon closer inspection.

Branching Out: Twenty Modern "Education Governors"

Unlike their forerunners who hailed from the South, the modern "Education Governors" display broad geographic diversity, representing a total of fifteen different states. Using Peirce and Hagstrom's (1983) classification from The Book of America, four each come from the Mid-Atlantic states (duPont, Hughes, Kean, Peterson) and the Deep South (Askew, Clinton, Graham, McNair); three each from the Border South (Dunn, Hunt, Sanford), the Mountain states (Apodaca, Hansen, Rampton), and the Pacific states (Brown, Hatfield, McCall); and one each from New England (Chafee), the Great Lakes (Milliken), and the Great Plains (Ray).

While the collective face of America's governors changed following the election of Ella Grasso (Connecticut) and Dixy Lee Ray (Washington) to gubernatorial seats in the 1970s and, more recently, with the successful campaigns of Madeleine Kunin (Vermont) and Kay Orr (Nebraska), men hold the vast majority of governorships. Thus, the fact that all twenty modern "Education Governors" are males -- and that nineteen of these twenty are white, non-Hispanics -- simply proves indicative of the larger gubernatorial population. Jerry Apodaca, as an Hispanic, represents the sole minority.

These modern "Education Governors" have served an average of 7.7 years in the executive office, with actual terms varying from four years (Apodaca, Dunn, Hansen, Peterson, and Sanford) to the fourteen years of William Milliken and Robert Ray. Again, in marked contrast with their staunch Democratic predecessors, ten were elected as Republicans (Chafee, Dunn, duPont, Hansen, Hatfield, Kean, McCall, Milliken, Peterson, and Ray) and ten as Democrats (Apodaca, Askew, Brown, Clinton, Graham, Hughes, Hunt, McNair, Rampton, and Sanford). Nine of these governors enjoyed the perceived advantage of having the same party affiliation as the majority in both houses of their state legislature (Apodaca, Askew, Brown, Clinton, Graham, Hunt, McNair, Peterson, and Sanford); the remaining eleven experienced several years in which the opposing party controlled at least one house of the state legislature (Chafee, Dunn, duPont, Hansen, Hatfield, Hughes, Kean, McCall, Milliken, Rampton, and Ray). Throughout their terms, Chafee and Dunn -- both Republicans -- continually faced legislatures dominated by Democrats.

Behind the Words: From Flurry to Fact

In the image of Aycock and their other turn-of-the-century forefathers, all twenty modern "Education Governors" ardently embraced the gospel of "high standards," "quality," and "excellence" in education -- words which continuously recur throughout their legislative and public addresses. Furthermore, virtually all of them supported this affirmation with generous contributions from state coffers. As would be expected, the actual dollars and cents appropriations for education increased in every case. More revealing figures show that total direct expenditures for higher education rose at a substantially higher rate than inflation during all but two of the administrations. Two percentage points separated these statistics in McCall's financially-pressed Oregon while William Milliken's exceptionally long (fourteen-year) tenure in Michigan also weathered several periods of severe economic hardship. And, total direct state expenditures for higher education climbed at least as sharply as total general state expenditures throughout eleven of the governorships (those of Sanford, Hatfield, Chafee, Hansen, McNair, Rampton, Peterson, Dunn, Hunt, Clinton, and Kean). The two figures differed by one percentage point during Apodaca's four-year term. Of the remaining eight administrations, four were led by Republicans (McCall, Milliken, Ray, and duPont) and four by Democrats (Brown, Hughes, Askew, and Graham).

Many of these governors, including Sanford, Clinton, and Kean, obtained their education funds through the politically unpalatable move of raising taxes; however, echoing Aycock's words of an earlier era, Milliken, Hughes, and Askew attested that quality education should not be considered a partisan issue.

Forty per cent of the modern "Education Governors" had been directly

concerned with education prior to their election through teaching or university trusteeship (Hatfield, Hansen, Apodaca, Clinton, and Kean) or indirectly involved in education through strong parental influence (Sanford, McNair, and Hunt). At least one-quarter of these governors -- Sanford, duPont, Hunt, Graham, and Kean -- regularly visited schools throughout their term of office, and Graham, on occasion, took over as teacher for the day.

Apparently cultivating a more cosmopolitan than local or regional affiliation, forty per cent of the modern "Education Governors" have evidenced aspirations to national political office. As of January 1988, the United States Senate counted Sanford, Hatfield, Chafee, and Graham among its members. Hunt and Apodaca lost in earlier attempts to join that body. In addition, Askew initially entered the 1984 race for the United States presidency, and duPont gained visibility as a 1988 presidential contender.

Two-thirds of these chief executives proved active participants in a variety of regional and national education endeavors. In addition to chairing the Education Commission of the States (ECS), the governors have been intimately linked with the Southern Regional Education Board (including Sanford, McNair, and Hunt as SREB Chairmen), the ECS Business Advisory Council, the National Commission on Reforming Secondary Education, the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, and the National Reading Council. Hunt and Kean proved energetic participants in deliberations of the Carnegie Forum Task Force on Teaching as a Profession which endorsed creation of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Kean later backed this recommendation as Chairman of the National Governors' Association's Task Force on Teaching while Clinton and

Graham also added to the Governors' 1991 Report on Education, working, respectively, with the Task Force on School Leadership and Management and the Task Force on College Quality. Moreover, Governors Sanford, Hunt, Clinton, and Kean are frequently spotlighted as speakers for such professional organizations as the American Association for Higher Education and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

Gubernatorial Reality and the Institutional Research Relationship

Overlaying the set of gubernatorial promises voiced in Inaugural and State of the State Addresses with each individual's tangible achievements yields almost complete congruence. All major education proposals of these "Education Governors" eventually were enacted, and, thus, to a large extent, they proved men of their word. Yet, one important caveat must temper this finding: Certain governors like Sanford and Kean promised -- and hence delivered -- more far-reaching results than their fellows.

Examining proclamations directly related to institutional research and planning functions, seventeen (eighty-five per cent) of the governors fulfilled pledges focusing on institutional mission or effectiveness. Brown displayed intense pride in the development of California's Master Plan for Higher Education, considering it one of his prime accomplishments. Similarly, Rampton proved instrumental in the creation of Utah's Master Plan while Milliken, Ray, Askew, Dunn, and Apodaca all charged special advisory groups to scrutinize the educational systems of their respective states -- from kindergarten through graduate school. McNair, Rampton, and Hunt dealt with the issue of higher education coordination through establishing or substantially revising state governing boards. Seeking to enhance an institution's mission, McCall elevated one Oregon state college to university status, and Sanford, Hatfield, Hughes, Chafee, Hansen, and

Peterson supported educational objectives leading to the establishment of community colleges. Finally, Kean queried institutional leaders in New Jersey as to their aspirations and then challenged each campus to live up to those goals.

Askew, Clinton, Graham, and Hunt (twenty per cent of the "Education Governors") specifically addressed issues of accountability and assessment, including mandated implementation of teacher testing and various competency examinations. During Askew's administration, Florida adopted the Accountability Act of 1976. In addition, Kean introduced New Jersey institutions to monetary Challenge Grants and other incentives for conducting assessment activities.

Such promises fulfilled have inevitably shaped the course of campus-based institutional research. Strikingly, this pattern is not unique to the past five years but, rather, reaches back to the early 1960s; however, the initial focus on statewide master plans and community colleges has given way to a current concentration on student outcomes.

As the authors of Time for Results recognized,

> some form of assessment is currently undertaken by most colleges and universities. From the most basic assessments of student learning, such as grading course examinations and term papers, to sophisticated norm-referenced examinations, colleges and universities already collect information about undergraduate student learning. However, this information is seldom collected systematically or analyzed comprehensively. Such information could be regularly collected and interpreted,

> supplemented with additional student outcomes information, and used to improve undergraduate teaching and learning. (NGA, 1986, p. 164)

Thus, governors are looking anxiously toward offices of institutional research and planning although never citing them as such. Indeed, state chief executives are hungry for results and for appropriate data that will accurately reflect educational progress over time. And, in consultation with their institution's chief executive, research practitioners are perhaps best situated to provide both the sought-after statistics and strategic campus planning. Now, more than ever, institutional researchers should be prepared to respond promptly to external calls for quality and effectiveness. As unequivocally expressed by Arkansas' Governor Bill Clinton,

> Governors will have to make many demands...State taxpayers will need to be convinced that an increased investment in higher education is worth their dollars. Colleges and universities will need to demonstrate that they can use new funds wisely and that their programs will lead to concrete improvements in the quality of life in the state...Increasing financial support without making increased demands on colleges does little good for anyone...We've got to prove that we're doing the job. (Clinton, quoted in Jaschik, 1986, p. 25)

However, the institutional research community can balance this heightened political presence on campuses by identifying potential implications of proposed state policies from the outset and closely monitoring gubernatorial agendas. Since the "Education Governors" proved overwhelmingly adept at transforming the spoken word into reality, major gubernatorial addresses deserve serious scrutiny. Equally important is knowledge of the state leaders' background and prior activities; extrapolating from the prime examples of Terry Sanford, Thomas Kean, and Bill Clinton, a governor with a history of educational involvement such as teaching, trusteeship, or commission or task force membership also may be tempted to "make his or her mark" by inaugurating a statewide "educational renaissance." After all, "Governors who [have] campaigned for education quality and even education spending, [have] proved at the polls that good education is good politics as well as good public policy" (NGA, 1987, p. viii).

Governors, Quality, and Institutional Research: A Once and Future Bond

This study has begun to shed some light on the significant but scantily researched education-gubernatorial connection, with particular attention to its relevance for institutional research. While this phenomenon has certainly grown increasingly pervasive and intense since the 1983 publication of A Nation at Risk, its origins actually emerged in the "Master Plan" efforts of the 1960s and beyond that in the crusade-like reforms of early twentieth century "Education Governors." Future analyses should focus on the public pledges and ultimate impact of other state chief executives who are popularly associated with education reform but were not among the twenty identified in this research. Such familiar names as former Governors Lamar Alexander (Tennessee), Charles S. Robb (Virginia),

and William Winter (Mississippi) come readily to mind.

Meanwhile, incumbent "Education Governors" like Thomas Kean and Bill Clinton continue their exhaustive quest for educational quality, confident of higher education's ability to rise to their challenges. Offices of institutional research and planning can play a critical role in determining their institution's appropriate response. Perhaps this inevitable involvement will even earn the astute institutional researcher recognition and respect as the campus president's best supporting actor or actress.

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